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The Big Pioche caught indulging in delicacies.

The scene shifted.

CHAPTER XL.

A NIGHT IN THE TUILERIES GARDENS.

As the night wore on, I remembered that once when a boy at the Polytechnique, I longed to penetrate one of the little enclosures which fenced the small flower-gardens beside the palace, and which were railed up from the public promenades by a low iron railing. The bouquets of rich flowers that grew there, sparkling with the light dew of a little *jet d'eau* that fell in rain drops over them, had often tempted my young heart; but still, in the day-time such a transgression would have been immediately punished. Now, with the strange caprice which so often prompts us in after years to do that which in youth we wished, but could not do, I wandered towards the gardens, and crossing over the low fence, entered the parterre: each step awoke the sleeping perfume of the flowers, and I strolled along the velvet turf until I reached a low bench, half covered with honeysuckle and woodbine. Here I threw myself down, and, wrapping my cloak around me, resolved to rest till daybreak. The stillness of all around, the balmy air, and my own musings, gradually conspired to make me drowsy, and I slept.

My sleep could not have been long, when I was awakened by a noise close beside me. I started up, and looked about, and for some seconds I could scarcely credit that I was not still dreaming. Not more than a dozen paces from where I lay, and where before the dark walls of the palace rose in unbroken blackness, was now a chamber, brilliantly lighted by several wax-lights that stood on a table. At the window, which opened to the ground, and led into the garden, stood the figure of a man, but from his position before the light I could not remark more than that he wore epaulettes. It was the noise of the opening jalousies which awoke me; and I could see his hand stretched out, as if to ascertain whether or not it was raining. At the table I could perceive another person, on whose uniform the light fell strongly, displaying many a cross and star, which twinkled with every stir he made. He was busily engaged writing, and never lifted his head from the paper. The walls of the room were covered with shelves, filled with books; and on the chairs about, and even on the floor, lay maps and drawings in every disorder; a sword and belt, as if just taken off, lay on the table among the writing materials, and a cocked hat beside them. While I noticed these details my very heart was chill within me. The dark figure at the window, which stirred not, seemed as if turned towards me, and more than once I almost

thought I could see his eyes bent upon me. This was, however, but the mere suggestion of my own fears, for in the shade of the seat no light whatever fell, and I was perfectly concealed.

In the deep stillness I could hear the scraping sound of the pen on the paper, and scarcely dared to breathe, lest I should cause discovery, when the figure retired from the window, and moved towards the table; for some minutes he appeared to stoop over a large map, which lay outstretched before him, and across which I could see his finger moving rapidly. Suddenly he stood erect, and in a voice which even now rings within my heart, said—"It must be so, Duroc; by any other route Bernadotte will be too late!" What was the reply I know not, such terror now fell over me. It was the emperor himself who spoke. It was he who the instant before was standing close beside me at the window; and thus, a second time in my life, did I become the unwilling eavesdropper of the man I most feared and respected of all the world. Before I could summon resolution to withdraw, Napoleon spoke again. "Hardenberg!" said he, in a tone of contemptuous passion—"Hardenberg is but a Prussian; the event will satisfy *his* scruples; besides, if they do talk about invasion of territory, you can reply, the Margraves were always open to belligerent parties; remind them of what took place in '96, and again in 1800; though, *parbleu*, the souvenir may not be so pleasant a one; protract the discussion, at all events, Duroc—time!—time!" Then added he, after a brief pause—"Let them advance, and they'll never repass the Danube; and if they wait for me, I'll fall upon them here—here between Ulm and Augsburg. You must, however, start for Berlin at once." At this instant a heavy hand fell upon my shoulder, and, passing down my arm, seized me by the wrist. I started back, and beheld a dragoon, for so his helmet and cloak bespoke him, of enormous stature, who, motioning me to silence, led me softly and with noiseless step along the flower-beds, as if fearful of attracting the emperor's notice. My limbs tottered beneath me as I went, for the dreadful imputation an accident might fix on me, stared me with all its awful consequences. Without a word on either side we reached the little railing, crossed it, and regained the open park, when the soldier, placing himself in front of me, said in a deep low voice—

"Your name—who are you?"

"An officer of the huitiéme regiment of hussars," said I, boldly.

"We shall see that presently," replied he, in a tone of disbelief. "How came you here?"

In a few words I explained how, having remained too late in the garden, I preferred to pass my night on a bench, to the unpleasantness of being brought up before the officer on duty, adding, that it was only on the very moment of his coming that I awoke.

"I know that," interrupted he, in a less surly voice. "I found you sleeping, and feared to awake you suddenly, lest in the surprise a word or a cry should escape you—one syllable had cost your head."

In the tone of these last few words there was something I thought

I could recognise, and resolving at a bold venture in such an emergency as I found myself placed, I said at a hazard—

"The better fortune mine, that I fell into the hands of a kind as well as of a brave soldier—the Corporal Pioche."

"*Sacristi!* You know me then!" cried he, thunderstruck.

"To be sure I do. Could I be an aid-de-camp to the General D'Auvergne, and not have heard of Pioche?"

"An aid-de-camp of the general," said he, starting back, as he carried his hand to the salute. "Pardon, *mon officier;* but you know that duty——"

"Quite true; it was all my own indiscretion. And now, Pioche, if you'll keep me company here till daybreak—it cannot be far off now—the light will soon satisfy you that my account of myself is a true one."

"Willingly, sir," said the gruff cuirassier: "my patrol is, to watch the parterres from the pavilion to the alleé yonder; and, if you please, we'll take up our quarters on this bench."

They who know not the strange mixture of deference and familiarity of which the relation between officer and soldier is made up in the French service, will perhaps wonder at the tone of almost equality in which we now conversed. But such is the case; the revolutionary armies acknowledged no other gradations of rank than such as the service conferred, nor any degree of superiority save that derivable from greater ability, or more daring heroism; and although no troops more implicitly obeyed the commands of their officers, the occasion of discipline over, a perfect feeling of equality reigned amongst all, whether they wore the epaulettes of colonel, or carried a musket in the ranks. With time, and the changes the consulate had introduced, much of this excessive familiarity was suppressed; still it was no uncommon thing to hear the humble rank and file address the general of division as "thou"—the expression of closest friendship, probably dating from the hours of schoolboy attachment: nor was the officer of rank thought less of, because in the hours of off-duty he mixed freely with those who had been his companions through life, and talked with them as brothers. It is probable that in no other nation such a course could have been practised, without a total subversion of all respect, and the ruin of all habits of order. The Frenchman is, however, essentially military—not merely warlike, like the inhabitants of Great Britain, his mind ever inclines to the details of war as an art. It is in generalship he glories, not the mere conflict of force; and the humblest soldier of the army takes an interest in the great game of tactics, which in any other people would be quite incredible. Hence, he submits to the control which otherwise he could not endure; for this, he yields to command at the hands of one, who, although his equal in all other respects, he here acknowledges as his superior. He knows, too, that the grade of officer is open to merit alone, and he feels that the epaulette may be his own one day. Such causes as these, constantly in operation, could not fail to raise the "*morale*" of an army; nor can we wonder that from such a source were derived

many, if not most of the great names that formed the marshals of France.

Again, to this military spirit the French owe the perfection of their tirailleur force—the consummate skill of independent parties, of which every campaign gave evidence. Napoleon found this spirit in the nation, and spared nothing to give it its fullest development. He quickly saw to what height of enthusiasm a people could be brought, to whom a cross or a decoration, an epaulette or a sabre of honour, were deemed the ample rewards of every daring and of every privation; and never in any age, or in any country, was chivalry so universally spread over the wide surface of a people. With them, rank claimed no exemption from fatigue or suffering. The officer fared little better than the soldier, on a march; in a battle, he was only more exposed to danger; by daring only could he win his way upwards: and an emulative ardour was continually maintained, which was ever giving to the world instances of individual heroism, far more brilliant than all the famed achievements of the crusaders.

This brief digression, unnecessary perhaps to many of my readers, may serve to explain to others how naturally our conversation took the easy tone of familiar equality; nor will they be surprised at the abrupt question of the cuirassier, as he said—

"*Milles tonnerres!* lieutenant, was it from your liking the post of danger you selected that bench yonder?"

"The choice was a mere accident."

"An accident, *morbleu!*" said he, with a low laugh. "That was what Lasalle called it at the Adige, when the wheel came off the eight-pounder in the charge, and the enemy carried off the gun. 'An accident,' said the 'petit caporal' to him. I was close by when he said it. Will your friends in Paris call it an accident if the '*Ordre du Jour*' to-morrow, condemn you to be shot? I know him well," continued Pioche—"that I do; I was second bombardier with him at Toulon—ay, and at Cairo too. I mind well the evening he came over to our quarters—poor enough we were at the time—no clothes—no rations. I was cook to our division, but somehow there was little duty in my department, till one day the vivandiere's ass—a brave beast he was, too, before provisions fell short—a spent shot took him in the flank, and killed him on the spot. *Sacristi!* what damage it did—all the canteens were smashed to atoms—horn goblets and platters knocked to pieces; but worst of all, a keg of true Nantz was broached, and every drop lost. Poor Madame Gougon, she loved that ass as if he had been one of the regiment; and though we all offered her assignats on our pay, for a month each, to give us the carcase, she wouldn't do it. No, faith! she would have him buried, and with funeral honours. *Parbleu!* it was a whim! but the poor thing was in grief, and we could not refuse her. I commanded the party," continued Pioche, "and a long distance we had to march, lest the shots might be heard in the quartier général. Well, we had some trouble in getting the poor soul away from the grave. *Sacristi!* she took it so much to heart, I thought she'd have masses said for

him; but we did succeed at last, and before dawn we were all within the camp as if nothing had happened. The whole of that day, however, the ass was never out of our minds. It was not grief—no! no! —don't think that—we were all thinking of what a sin it was to have him buried there—such a fine beast as he was—and not a pound of meat to be had, if you were to offer a nine-pounder gun for it. 'He is never the worse for his funeral,' said I; 'remember, boys, how well preserved he was in brandy before he was buried. Let's have him up again! No sooner was night come, than we set off for the place where we laid him, and in less than two hours I was busily employed in making a delicious *salmi* of his haunch. *Milles bombes!* I think I have the smell of it before me; it was *gibier*, and the gravy was like a *purée*. We were all pleasantly seated round the fire, watching every turn of the roast, when, *crack!* I heard the noise of the patrol bringing his gun to the present, and before we had time to jump up, the 'petit caporal' was upon us—he was mounted on a little dark Arab, and dressed in his grey surtout.

"'What's all this here?' cried he, pulling up short, while the barb sniffed the air, just as if he guessed what the meat was. 'Who has stolen this sheep?'

"'It is not a sheep, general,' said I, stepping forward, and trying to hide the long ladle I was basting with.

"'Not a sheep—then it is an ox, mayhap, or a calf,' said he again, with an angry look.

"'Neither, general,' said I; 'it was a—a—a beast of our division.'

"'A beast of your division!—what does that mean? No trifling, mind. Out with it at once. What's this? Where did it come from?'

"'An ass, may it please you, sir,' said I, trembling all over, for I saw he was in a rare passion; and as he repeated the word after me, I told him the whole story, and how we could not suffer such capital prog to be eaten by any other than good citizens of the republic.

"While I was telling him so much, the rest stood round terrified; they could not even turn the joint, though it was burning, and to say truth, I thought myself we were all in a bad way, when suddenly he burst into a fit of laughing, and said—

"'What part of France do these fellows come from?'

"'Alsace, mon general,' was the answer from every one

"'I thought so—I thought so,' said he. 'Sybarites—all.

"'No, mon general — grenadiers of the fourth — Milhaud's brigade,' said I; and with that he turned away, and we could hear him laughing long after he galloped off. I saw he mistook us," said Pioche, "and that he could not be angry with the old fourth."

"You must have seen a great deal of hardship, Pioche?" said I, as he came to a pause; and wishing to draw him on, to speak more of his campaigns.

"*Ma foi!* there were few who saw service from '92 to '97, had not

their share of it; but they were brave times too; every battle had its day of promotion afterwards. Le petit caporal would ride down the ranks with his staff, looking for this one, and asking for that. 'Where's the adjutant of the sixth?' 'Dead, mon general.' 'Where's the colonel of the voltigeurs?' 'Badly wounded.' 'Carry him this sabre of honour.' 'Who fell over the Austrian standard, and carried away the fragment of the drapeau?' 'One of my fellows, general; here he is.' 'And what is your name, my brave fellow?'"

The corporal paused here, and drew a deep breath; and after a few seconds' pause, added in altered tone—"*Sacristi!* they were fine times."

"But what did he say to the soldier that took the colours?" asked I, impatiently. "Who was he?"

"It was I," replied Pioche himself, in a deep voice, where pride and devotion struggled powerfully together.

"You, Pioche—indeed! Well, what said the general when he saw you?"

"'Ah, Pioche,' said he, gaily—'my old friend of Toulouse.'

"'Yes, general,' said I, 'we've had some warm work together.'

"'True, Pioche, and may again, perhaps; but you've been made a corporal since that; what am I to do for you now?'

"This was a puzzling question, and I did not know how to answer it; and he repeated it before I could make up my mind.

"'Is there nothing, then, in which I can be of use to Corporal Pioche?'

"'Yes, mon general,' said I, 'there is.'

"'Speak it out, man, then; what is it?'

"'I wish, then, you'd rate the commissary-general of our division for one blunder he's ever making. The powder they serve us out is always wet, and our bread is as hard as *mitraille:* neither bayonets nor teeth will last for ever, you know, general.' And he burst out a laughing before I finished.

"'Rest assured, Pioche, I'll look to this,' said he, and he kept his word."

"But why didn't you ask for promotion?" said I; "what folly, was it not, to throw away such a chance? You might have been an officer ere this."

"No," replied he, with a sorrowful shake of the head; "that was impossible."

"But why so? Bonaparte knew you well; he often noticed you."

"True—all true," said he, more sadly than before; "but then——"

"What, then?" asked I, with more of interest than delicacy at the moment.

"I never learned to read," said Pioche, in a low voice, which trembled with agitation, while he drew his swarthy hand across his eyes, and was silent.

The few words so spoken thrilled most powerfully within me. I

saw that I had awakened the saddest thoughts of the poor fellow's heart, and would have given worlds to be able to recall my question. Here then was the corroding sorrow of his life—the grief that left its impress on his stern features, and tinged with care the open brow of the brave soldier. Each moment our silence was prolonged, made it still more poignant, but I made an effort to break it, and happily with success.

"After all, Pioche," said I, laying my hand on his arm, "I would willingly exchange my epaulettes for these stripes on your sleeve: to have had Bonaparte speak to me as he has done to you, that was a prouder distinction than any other, and will be a fonder recollection, too, hereafter."

"Do you think so, mon lieutenant?" said the poor fellow, turning round quickly, as a faint smile played about his features. "Do you think so? *Sacristi!* I have said as much to myself sometimes, when I've been alone; and then I've almost thought I could hear his kind soft voice ringing in my ears—for it is kind and soft as a woman's, when he pleases, though, *parbleu!* it can call like a trumpet at other times, ay, and tingle within your heart, till it sets your blood boiling, and makes your hands twitch. I mind well the campaign in the Valais—the words keep dinning in my ears to this hour."

"What was that, Pioche," said I, pleased to see him turn from the remembrance of his own regrets.

"It is a good while past now—I forget the year exactly—but we were marching on Italy, and it was in spring; still the ground was covered with snow; every night came on with a hail-storm, that lasted till nigh daybreak; and when we arose from the bivouac, we were so stiff and frozen we could not move. They said, at the time, something went wrong with the commissariat, but when did it ever go right, I wonder? Ammunition and provisions were always late; and though the general used to drive away a commissary every week or ten days for misconduct, the new ones that came turned out just as bad. The petit caporal kept sending them word to Paris not to send down any more '*savants*,' but a good honest man, with common sense and active habits; but—*parbleu!* birds of that feather must have been rare just then, for we never could catch one of them. Whatever was the cause, we never were so ill off; our *shakos* were like wet paper, and took any shape; and out of ridicule we used to come upon parade with them fashioned into three-cocked hats, and pointed caps, and slouched beavers. The officers couldn't say a word, you know, all this time: it was not our fault if we were in such misery. Then, as to shoes—a few could boast of the upper leathers, but a sole, or a heel, was not to be found in a company. Our coats were actually in rags, and a pivot sentry looked, for all the world, like a flag staff, as he stood fluttering in the wind.

"We bore up, however, as well as we could for some time, grumbling occasionally over our condition, and sometimes laughing at it, when we had the heart, till at last, when we saw the new convoy

arrive, and all the biscuits distributed among the young regiments and the new conscripts, we could endure it no longer, and a terrible outcry arose among the troops. We were all drawn up on parade—it was an inspection; for, *parbleu!* though we were as ragged as scarecrows, they would have us out twice a week to review us, and put us through the manœuvres. Scarcely had the general—it was Bonaparte himself—got half way down the line, when a shout ran from rank to rank—'Bread! shoes! caps! biscuits!'

"'What do I hear?' said Bonaparte, standing up in his stirrups, and frowning at the line. 'Who are the malcontents, that dare to cry out on parade? Let them stand out. Let me see them.'

"And at once more than half the regiment of grenadiers sprang forward, and shouted louder than before—'Bread! bread! Let us have food and clothing! If we are to fight, let us not die of hunger!'

"'Grenadiers of the fourth,' cried he, in a terrible voice, 'to your ranks! Second division, and third!' shouted he, with his hand up, 'form in square!—carry arms!—present arms!—front rank, kneel! —kneel!' said he again, louder; for you know we never did *that* in those days. However, every word was obeyed, and down dropped the leading files on their knees, and there we were rooted to the ground. Not a man spoke—all silent as death.

"He then advanced to the front of the staff, and pointing his hand to a convoy of waggons that could just be seen turning the angle of the road, with white flags flying, to show what they were, called out —'Commissary-general, distribute full rations and half ammunition to the young regiments—half rations and full ammunition to the veterans of Egypt!' A shout of applause burst out, but he cried louder than before—'Silence in the ranks!' Then taking off his chapeau, he stood bare-headed before us; and in a voice, like the bugle that blows the charge, he read from a large paper in his hand—'In the name of the French republic—one and indivisible. The directory of the nation decrees—that the thanks of the government be given to the grenadiers of the fourth, who have deserved well of their country. Vive la republique!'

"'Vive la republique!' shouted the whole square in a roar, like the sea itself. Who thought more of hardships or hunger then? Our only desire was, when we were to meet the enemy; and many a jest and many a laugh went round, as we loaded our pouches with the new ammunition.

"'Who's that fellow yonder?' said Bonaparte, as he rode slowly down the line. 'I should know him, I think. Isn't that Pioche?'

"'Yes, mon general,' said I, saluting him. 'It is what remains of poor Pioche; *parbleu!* very little more than half, though.'

"'Ah! glutton,' said he laughing, 'I ought to have guessed you were here; one such gourmand is enough to corrupt a whole brigade.'

"'Pioche is a good soldier, citizen general,' said my captain, who was an old schoolfellow of mine.

"'I know it, captain,' said the general.

"'You were in Excellman's dragoons, Pioche, if I mistake not?'

"'Two years and ten months, citizen general.'

"'Why did you leave them, and when?'

"'At Monte Bello, with the colonel's permission.'

"'And the reason?'

"'*Morbleu!* it was a fancy I had. They killed two horses under me that day, and I saw I was not destined for the cavalry.'

"'Ha! ha!' said he, with a sly laugh; 'had they been asses, the thing might have been different—eh?'

"'Yes, mon general,' said I, growing red, for I knew what he meant.

"'Come, Pioche, you must go back again to your old corps; they want one or two like you—though, *parbleu!* you'll ruin the republic in remounts.'

"'As you please it, general.'

"'Well, what shall I do for you besides? Any more commissaries to row—eh? Methinks no bad time to gratify you in that way.'

"'Ah, mon general, if you would only hang up one, now and then.'

"'So I intend, the next time I hear of any of my soldiers being obliged to eat the asses of the vivandieres,' and with that he rode on laughing, though none, save myself, knew what he alluded to, and *ma foi!* I was not disposed to turn the laugh against myself by telling; but there goes the réveillée, and I must leave you, mon lieutenant, the gates will be open in a few minutes."

"Good-bye, Pioche," said I, "and many thanks for your pleasant company, I hope we shall meet again and soon."

"I hope so, mon lieutenant; and if it be at a bivouac fire, all the better."

The gallant corporal made his military salute, wheeled about, stiff as if on parade, and departed; while I, throwing my cloak over my arm, turned into the broad alley and left the garden.

CHAPTER XLI.

A STORY OF THE ——'92.

I FOUND every thing in the Rue de Rohan as I had left it the day before. General D'Auvergne had not been there during my absence, but a messenger from Versailles brought intelligence that the court would arrive that evening in Paris, and in all likelihood the general would accompany them.

My day was then at my own disposal, and having dressed, I strolled out to enjoy all the strange and novel sights of the great capital. They who can carry their memories back to Paris at that period, may remember the prodigious amount of luxury and wealth so prodigally exhibited—the equipages, the liveries, the taste in dress, were all of the most costly character—the very shops, too, vied with each other in the splendour and richness of their display, and court uniforms and ornaments of jewellery glittered in every window. Hussar jackets in all their bravery—chapeaus covered with feather trimming and looped with diamonds—sabres with ivory scabbards encrusted with topaz and torquoise, replaced the simple costumes of the revolutionary era, as rapidly as did the high-sounding titles of "excellence" and "monseigneur," the unpretending designation of "citoyen." Still the military feature of the land was in the ascendant: in the phrase of the day, it was the "moustache" that governed. Not a street had not its group of officers, on horseback or on foot—regiments passed on duty, or arrived from the march at every turn of the way. The very rabble kept time and step as they followed, and the warlike spirit animated every class of the population. All these things ministered to my enthusiasm, and set my heart beating the stronger for the time, when the career of arms was to open before me. This, if I were to judge from all I saw, could not now be far distant. The country for miles around Paris was covered with marching men, their faces all turned eastward —orderlies, booted and splashed, trotted rapidly from street to street, and general officers, with their aid-de-camps, rode up and down with a haste that boded preparation.

My mind was too full of its own absorbing interests to make me care to visit the theatre, and having dined in a café on the Boulevard, I turned towards the general's quarters, in the hope of finding him arrived. As I entered the Rue de Rohan, I was surprised at a crowd collected about the door, watching the details of packing a travelling carriage which stood before it. A heavy fourgon loaded with military chests and boxes, seemed also to attract their attention, and call forth many a surmise as to its destination.

"Le petit caporal has something in his head, depend upon it." said a thin dark-whiskered fellow with a wooden leg, and whose air and gesture bespoke the old soldier—"the staff never move off, extra post, without a good reason for it."

"It is the English are about to catch it this time," said a miserable-looking decrepid creature, who was occupied in roasting chestnuts over an open stove. "Hot, all hot, messieurs and mesdames, real 'marrons de Nancy'—the true and only veritable chestnuts with a truffle flavour.—*Sacristi!* now the sea wolves will meet their match. It is such brave fellows as you, monsieur le grenadier, can make them tremble."

The old pensioner smoothed down his moustache and made no reply.

"The English indeed," said a fat, ruddy-faced woman, with a slight line of dark beard on her upper lip: "my husband's a pioneer in the twenty-second, and says they're nothing better than poltroons—how we made them run at Arcola—wasn't it Arcola?" said she, as a buzz of laughter ran through the crowd.

"Tonnerre de guerre," cried the little man, "if I was at them." A loud burst of merriment met this warlike speech, while the maimed soldier, apparently pleased with the creature's courage, smiled blandly on him as he said—"Let me have two sous worth of your chestnuts."

Leaving the party to their discussion, I now entered the house, and edging my way up stairs between trunks and packing-cases, arrived at the drawing-room. The general had just come in; he had been the whole morning at court, and was eating a hurried dinner in order to return to the Tuileries for the evening reception. Although his manner towards me was kind and cordial in the extreme, I thought he looked agitated and even depressed, and seemed much older and more broken than before.

"You see, Burke, you'll have little time to enjoy Paris gaieties—we leave to-morrow."

"Indeed, sir; so soon."

"Yes, Lasalle is off already; Dorsenne starts in two hours; and we three, rendezvous at Coblentz. I wished much to see you," continued he. after a minute's pause; "but I could not get away from Versailles even for a day. Tell me, have you got a letter I wrote to you when at Mayence. I mean, is it still in existence?"

"Yes, sir," said I, somewhat astonished at the question.

"I wrote it hurriedly," added he, with something of confusion in his manner—"do let me see it."

I unlocked my writing desk at once and handed him his own letter. He opened it hastily, and having thrown his eyes speedily across it, said, and in a voice far more at ease than before—

"That will do. I feared lest perhaps —— but no matter. This is better than I thought."

With this he gave the letter back into my hands, and appeared for some moments engaged in deep thought; then with a voice and

manner which showed a different channel was given to his thoughts, he said—

"The game has opened—the Austrians have invaded Bavaria. The whole disposable force of France is on the march—a hurried movement—but so it is—Napoleon always strikes, like his own emblem, the eagle."

"True, sir; but even that serves to heighten the chivalrous feeling of the soldier, when the sword springs from the scabbard at the call of honour, and is not drawn slowly forth at the whispered counsel of some wily diplomate."

He smiled half mournfully at the remark, or at my impetuosity in making it, as he said—

"My dear boy, never flatter yourself that the cause of any war can enter into the calculation of the soldier. The liberty he fights for, is often the rankest tyranny—the patriotism he defends, the veriest oppression. Play the game as though the stake were but your own ambition, if you would play it manfully. As for me, I buckle on the harness for the last time —— come what will of it. The emperor feels, and justly feels, indignant that many of the older officers have declined the service by which alone they were elevated to rank, and wealth, and honour. It was not then at the moment when he distinguished me by an unsought promotion, still more, conferred a personal favour on me, that I could ask leave to retire from the army."

By the tone in which he said these last few words I saw that the general was now approaching the topic I felt so curious about, and did not venture by a word to interrupt or divert his thoughts from it. My calculation proved correct; for after meditating some eight or ten minutes, he drew his chair closer to mine, and in a voice of ill-repressed agitation spoke thus:—

"You doubtless know the history of our great revolution, the causes that led to, the consequences that immediately sprung from it—the terrible anarchy, the utter confiscation of wealth, and worse still, the social disorganization that invaded every family, however humble, or however exalted; setting wives against their husbands, children against their parents, and making brothers sworn enemies to each other. It was in vain for any man once engaged in the struggle, to draw back; the least hesitation to perform any order of the convention—the delay of a moment, to think, was death; some one was ever on the watch to denounce the man thus deliberating, and he was led forth to the guillotine like the blackest criminal. The immediate result of all this was a distrust that pervaded the entire nation. No one knew who to speak to, nor dared any confide in him who once had been his dearest friend. The old royalists trembled at every stir—the few demonstrations they forced themselves to make of concurrence in the new state of things, were received with suspicion and jealousy. The 'Blues,' for so the revolutionary party was called, thirsted for their blood; the aristocracy had been, as they deemed, long their oppressors; and where vengeance ceased, cupidity begun. They longed to seize upon the confiscated estates, and revel as masters in the halls where so oft they

had waited as lacqueys. But the evil ended not here—wherever private hate, or secret malice lurked, an opportunity for revenge now offered, and for one head that fell under the supposed guilt of treason to France, a hundred dropped beneath the axe, from causes of personal animosity and long-nurtured vengeance; and thus many an idle word uttered in haste or carelessness, some passing slight, some chance neglect, met now its retribution, and that retribution was ever death.

"It chanced that in the south, in one of those remote districts, where intelligence is always slow in arriving, and where political movements rarely disturb the quiet current of daily life, there lived one of those old seigneurs who, at that period, were deemed sovereign princes in the little locale they inhabited. The soil had been their own for centuries—long custom had made them respected and looked up to—while the acts of kindness and benevolence in which from father to son their education consisted, formed even a stronger tie to the affections of the peasantry. The church, too, contributed not a little to the maintenance of this feudalism, and the "chateau" entered into the subject of the village prayers, as naturally as though a very principle of their faith. There was something beautifully touching in the intercourse between the lord of the soil and its tillers—in the kindly interest of the one, repaid in reverence and devotion by the others: *his* foresight for their benefit—*their* attachment and fidelity; the paternal care, the filial love, made a picture of rural happiness such as no land ever equalled, such as perhaps none will ever see again. The seigneur of whom I speak, was a true type of this class—he had been, in his boyhood, a page at the gorgeous court of Louis XV., mixed in the voluptuous fascinations of the period—but early disgusted by the sensuality of the day, retired to his distant chateau, bringing with him a wife, one of the most beautiful and accomplished persons of the court, but one who, like himself, preferred the peace and tranquillity of a country life to the whirlwind pleasures of a vicious capital. For years they lived childless; but at last, after a long lapse of time, two children were born to this union, a boy and girl, both lovely, and likely, in every respect, to bless them with happiness. Shortly after the birth of the girl, the mother became delicate, and after some months of suffering, died. The father, who never rallied from the hour of her death, and took little interest in the world, soon followed her, and the children were left orphans, when the eldest was but four years of age, and his sister but three. Before the count died he sent for his steward—you know that the steward, or intendant, in France, was formerly the person of greatest trust in any family, the faithful adviser in times of difficulty, the depository of secrets, the friend, in a word, who in humble guise offered his counsel in every domestic arrangement, and without whom no project was entertained or determined on, and usually the office was hereditary, descending from father to son for centuries.

"In this family such was the case, his father and grandfather before him had filled the office, and Leon Guichard well knew every tradition of the house, and from his infancy his mind had been stored with tales of its ancient wealth and former greatness. His father had

died but a short time previous, and when the count's last illness seized him, Leon was only in the second year of his stewardship. Brief as the period was, however, it had sufficed to give abundant proof of his zeal and ability. New sources of wealth grew up under his judicious management—improvements were every where conspicuous; and while the seigneur himself found his income increased by nearly one half, the tenants had gained in equal proportion, such was the result of his activity and intelligence. These changes, marvellous as they may seem, were then of frequent occurrence—the lands of the south had been tilled for centuries without any effort at improvement—sons were content to go on as their fathers had done before them—increased civilization, with its new train of wants and luxuries, never invaded this remote, untravelled district, and primitive tastes and simple habits succeeded each other generation after generation unaltered and unchanged. Suddenly, however, a new light broke on the world, which penetrated even the darkness of the far-off valleys of La Provence. Intelligence began to be more widely diffused—men read and reflected—the rudiments of every art and every science were put within the reach of humble comprehensions; and they who before were limited to memory or hearsay for such knowledge as they possessed, could now apply at the fountain for themselves. Leon Guichard was not slow in cultivating these new resources, and applying them to the circumstances about him; and although many an obstacle arose, dictated by stupid adherence to old customs, or fast-rooted prejudice against new-fashioned methods—by perseverance he overcame them all, and actually enriched the people in spite of themselves.

"The seigneur, himself a man of no mean intellect, saw much of this with sorrow—he felt that a mighty change was accomplishing, and that as one by one the ancient landmarks by which men had been guided for ages were removed, none could foresee what results might follow, nor where the passion for alteration might cease. The superstitions of the church, harmless in themselves, were now openly attacked; its observances, before so deeply venerated, were even assailed as idle ceremonies, and it seemed as if the strong cable that bound men to faith and loyalty had parted, and that their minds were drifting over a broad and pathless sea. Such was the ominous opening of the revolution, such the terrible ground swell before the storm.

"On his death-bed, then, he entreated Leon to be aware that evil days were approaching—that the time was not distant when men should rely upon the affection and love of those around them, on the ties that attached them to each other for years long, on the mutual interests that had grown up from their cradles—he besought him to turn the people's minds, as far as might be, from the specious theories that were afloat, and fix them on their once-loved traditions—and, above all, he charged him, as the guardian of his orphan children, to keep *them* aloof from the contamination of dangerous doctrines, and to train them up in the ancient virtues of their house, in charity and benevolence.

"Scarce had the old count's grave closed over him, when men began

to perceive a marked change in Leon Guichard; no longer humble even to subserviousness as before, he now assumed an air of pride and haughtiness that soon estranged his companions from him. As guardian to the orphan children, he resided in the chateau, and took on him the pretensions of the master. Its stately equipage, with great emblazoned panels, the village wonder at every fete-day, was now replaced by a more modern vehicle, newly arrived from Paris, in which Monsieur Guichard daily took his airings. The old servants, many of them born in the chateau, were sent adrift, and a new and very different class succeeded them; all was changed, even the little path that led up from the presbytère to the chateau, and along which the old curé was seen wending his way on each Sunday to his dinner with the seigneur, was now closed—the gate walled up—while the Sabbath itself was only dedicated to greater festivities and excess, to the scandal of the villagers.

"Meanwhile, the children grew up in strength and beauty; like wild flowers, they had no nurture, but they flourished in all this neglect, ignorant and unconscious of the scenes around them. They roved about the live-long day through the meadows, or that wilderness of a garden, on which no longer any care was bestowed, and where rank luxuriance gave a beauty of its own to the rich vegetation. With the unsuspecting freshness of their youth, they enjoyed the present, without a thought of the future—they loved each other, and were happy. To them the vague reports and swelling waves of the revolution, which each day gained ground, brought neither fear nor apprehension; they little dreamed that the violence of political strife could ever reach their quiet valleys; nor did they think the hour was near when the tramp of soldiery, and the ruffian shout of predatory war were to replace the song of the vigneron, and the dance of the villager. The revolution came at last, sweeping like a torrent over the land—it blasted as it went—beneath its baneful breath every thing withered and wasted—loyalty, religion, affection, and brotherly love—all died out in the devoted country—anarchy and bloodshed were masters of the scene. The first dreadful act of this fearful drama passed like a dream to those, who, at a distance from Paris, only read of the atrocities of that wretched capital; but when the wave rolled nearer, when crowds of armed men, wild and savage in look, with ragged uniforms and blood-stained hands, prowled about the villages, where in happier times a soldier had never been seen—when the mob around the guillotine supplied the place of the gathering at the market—when the pavement was wet and slippery with human blood—men's natures suddenly became changed, as though some terrible curse from on high had fallen on them—their minds caught up the fearful contagion of revolt, and a mad impulse to deny all they had once held sacred and venerable, seized on all. Their blasphemies against religion went hand in hand with their desecration of every thing holy in social life, and a pre-eminence in guilt became the highest object of ambition. Sated with slaughter, bloated with crime, the nation reeled like a drunken savage over the ruin it created, and with the insane lust of blood, poured

forth its armed thousands throughout the whole of Europe. Then began the much-boasted triumphs of the revolutionary armies—the lauded victories of those great assertors of liberty—say, rather, the carnage of famished wolves—the devastating rage of blood-thirsty maniacs. The conscription seized on the whole youth of France, as if fearful that in the untarnished minds of the young the seeds of better things might bear fruit in season. They carried them away to scenes of violence and rapine, where, amid the shouts of battle and the cries of the dying, no voice of human sympathy might touch their hearts, no trembling of remorse should stir within them.

"'You are named in the conscription, monsieur,' said Leon, in a short, abrupt tone, as one morning he entered the dressing-room of his young master.

"'Me! I named in the conscription!' replied the other, with a look of incredulity and anger. 'This is but a sorry jest, Master Leon, and not in too good taste, either.'

"'Good or bad,' answered the steward, 'the fact is as I say, here is the order from the *municipale;* you were fifteen, yesterday, you know.'

"'True; and what then; am I not Marquis de Neufchatel, Count de Rochefort, in right of my mother?'

"'There are no more marquises, no more counts,' said the other roughly; 'France has had enough of such cattle; the less you allude to them the safer for your head.'

"He spoke truly, the reign of the aristocracy was ended; and while they were yet speaking, an emissary of the convention, accompanied by a party of troops, arrived at the chateau to fetch away the newly-drawn conscript.

"I must not dwell on the scene which followed. The heart-rending sorrow of those who had lived but for each other, now torn asunder for the first time, not knowing when, if ever, they were to meet again. His sister wished to follow him, but even had he permitted it, such would have been impossible. The dreadful career of the revolutionary soldier was an obstacle insurmountable. The same evening the battalion of infantry to which he was attached began their march towards Savoy, and the lovely orphan of the chateau fell dangerously ill.

"Youth, however, triumphed over her malady, which indeed was brought on by grief; and after some weeks, she was again restored to health. During the interval, nothing could be more kind and attentive than Leon Guichard; his manner, of late years rough and uncivil, became softened and tender; the hundred little attentions which illness seeks for, he paid with zeal and watchfulness; every thing which could alleviate her sorrow or calm her afflicted mind, was resorted to, with a kind of instinctive delicacy, and she began to feel that in her long-cherished dislike of the intendant, she had done him grievous wrong.

"This change of manner attracted the attention of many besides the inhabitants of the chateau. They remarked his altered looks and

bearing, the more studied attention to his dress and appearance, and the singular difference in all his habits of life; no longer did he pass his time in the wild orgies of debauchery and excess, but in careful management of the estate, and rarely or never left the chateau after nightfall.

"A hundred different interpretations were given to this line of acting: some said that the more settled condition of political affairs had made him cautious and careful, for it was now the reign of the Directory, and the old excesses of the '92 were no longer endured; others, that he was naturally of a kind and benevolent nature, and that his savage manner and reckless conduct were assumed merely in compliance with the horrible features of the time. None, however suspected the real cause. Leon Guichard was in love! Yes, the humble steward, the coarse follower of the vices of that detestable period was captivated by the beauty of the young girl, now springing into womanhood. The freshness of her artless nature, her guileless innocence, her soft voice, her character so balanced between gaiety and thoughtfulness, her loveliness, so unlike all he had ever seen before, had seized upon his whole heart; and, as the sun darting from behind the blackest clouds will light up the surface of a bleak landscape, touching every barren rock and tipping every bell of purple heath with colour and richness, so over his rugged nature the beauty of this fair girl shed a very halo of light, and a spirit awoke within him to seek for better things, to endeavour better things, to fly the coarse depraved habits of his former self, to conform to the tastes of her he worshipped. Day by day his stern nature became more softened. No longer those terrible bursts of passion, to which he once gave way, escaped him; his voice, his very look, too, was changed in its expression, and a gentleness of manner almost amounting to timidity, now characterised him who had once been the type of the most savage Jacobin.

"She to whom this wondrous change was owing knew nothing of the miracle she had worked; she would not, indeed, have believed, had any one told her. She scarcely remarked him when they met, and did not perceive that he was no longer like his former self; her whole soul wrapped up in her dear brother's fate, she lived from week to week in the thought of his letters home. It is true her life had many enjoyments which owed their source to the intendant's care; but she knew not of this, and felt more grateful to him when he came letter in hand from the little post of the village, than when the fair moss roses of spring filled the vases of the *salon*, or the earliest fruits of summer decked her table. At times, something in his demeanour would strike her—a tinge of sorrow it seemed rather than aught else; but as she attributed this, as every other grief, to her brother's absence, she paid no further attention to it, and merely thought good Leon had more feeling than they used to give him credit for.

"At last, the campaign of Arcola over, the young soldier obtained a short leave to see his sister. How altered were they both: she from the child had become the beautiful girl; her eyes flashing with the

brilliant sparkle of youth, her step elastic, her colour changing with every passing expression. He was already a man, bronzed and sunburnt; his dark eyes darker, and his voice deeper, but still his former self in all the warmth of his affection to his sister.

"The lieutenant, for so was he always called by the old soldier who accompanied him as his servant, and oftentimes by the rest of the household, had seen much of the world in the few years of his absence.

"The chances and changes of a camp had taught him many things which lie far beyond its own limits, and he had learned to scan men's minds and motives, with a quick eye and ready wit. He was not long therefore in observing the alteration in Leon Guichard's manner, nor was he slow in tracing it to its real cause. At first, the sudden impulse of his passion would have driven him to any length; the presumption of such a thought was too great to endure—but then the times he lived in taught him some strong lessons; he remembered the scenes of social disorder and anarchy of his childhood; how every rank became subverted, and how men's minds were left to their own unbridled influences to choose their own position, and he bethought him, that in such trials as these, Leon had conducted himself with moderation; that to his skilful management it was owing, if the property had not suffered confiscation like so many others, and that it was perhaps hard to condemn a man for being struck by charms, which, however above him in the scale of rank, were still continually before his eyes. Reasoning thus, he determined as the wisest course, to remove his sister to the house of a relative, where she could remain during his absence. This would at once put a stop to the steward's folly—for so he could not help deeming it—and what was of equal consequence in the young soldier's eyes—prevent his sister being offended by ever suspecting the existence of such a feeling towards her. The plan once resolved on, met no difficulty from his sister; his promise to return soon to see her was enough to compensate for any arrangement, and it was determined that they should set out towards the south by the first week in September.

"When the intimation of this change first reached Leon, which it did from the other servants, he could not believe it, and resolved to hasten to the lieutenant himself, and ask if it were true. On that day, however, the young soldier was absent shooting, and was not to return before night. Tortured with doubt and fear, trembling at the very thought of her departure—whose presence had been the load-star of his life—he rushed from the house and hurried into the wood. Every spot reminded him of her, and he shuddered to think that in a few hours his existence would have lost its spring. That ere the week was past, he would be alone without the sight of her, whom, even to have seen, constituted the happiness of the whole day. Revolving such sad thoughts, he strolled on, not knowing whither, and at last, on turning the angle of a path, found himself before the object of his musings; she was returning from a farewell visit to one of the cottagers, and was hastening to the chateau to dress for dinner.

"'Ah! Monsieur Leon,' said she, suddenly, 'I am glad to meet you here—these poor people at the wooden bridge will miss me, I fear; you must look to them in my absence—and, there is old Jeanette—she fancies she can spin still—I pray you let her have her little pension regularly. The children at Calotte, too, they are too far from the school—mind that they have their books.'

"'And are you indeed going from hence, mademoiselle?' said he, in a tone and accent so unlike his ordinary one, as to make her start with surprise.

"'Yes, to be sure. We leave the day after to-morrow.'

"'And have you no regret, mademoiselle, to leave the home of your childhood and those you have——known there?'

"'Sir!' replied she haughtily, as the tone of his voice assumed a meaning which could not be mistaken, 'you seem to have forgotten yourself somewhat, or you had not dared ——'

"'Dared!' interrupted he, in a louder key—'dared—I have dared more than that. Yes,' cried he in a voice where passion could be no longer held under—'Leon Guichard, the steward, has dared to love his master's daughter. Start not so proudly back, madame. Time was when such an avowal had been a presumption death could not repay, but these days are past. The haughty have been well humbled; they who deemed their blood a stream too pure to mingle with the current in plebeian veins, have poured it lavishly beneath the guillotine. Leon Guichard has no master now!'

"The fire flashed from his eyes as he spoke, and his colour, pale at first, grew darker and darker, till his face became almost purple, while his nostrils, swelled to twice their natural size, dilated and contracted like those of a fiery charger. Terrified at the frightful paroxysm of passion before her, the timid girl endeavoured to allay his anger, and replied—

"'You know well, Leon, that my brother has ever treated you as a friend ——'

"'He—a friend!' cried he, stamping on the ground, while a look of demoniac malice lit up his features.—'He, who talks to me as though I were a vassal, a slave; he, who deems his merest word of approval a recompense for all my labour, all my toil; he, whose very glance shoots into my heart like a dagger. Think you, I forgive him the contemptuous treatment of nineteen years, or that I can pardon insults because they have grown into habits. Hear me,' he grasped her wrist rigidly as he spoke, and continued, 'I have sworn an oath to be revenged on him from the hour when a boy, scarce eight years old, he struck me on the face and called me *canaille*. I vowed his ruin. I toiled for it, I strove for it, and I succeeded—ay, succeeded. I obtained from the Convention the confiscation of your lands—all—every thing you possessed. I held the titles in my possession, for I was the owner of this broad chateau—ay—Leon Guichard—even so. You were but my guest here. I kept it by me many a day, and when your brother was drawn in the conscription, I resolved to assert my right before the world.' He paused for a moment, while a tremendous convulsion shook his frame, and made him tremble like one in an ague; then

suddenly rallying, he passed his hand across his brow, and in a lower voice resumed—'I would have done so but for you.'

"'For me!—what mean you?' said she, almost sinking with terror.

"'I loved you—loved you as only he can love who can surrender all his cherished hopes—his dream of ambition—his vengeance even, to his love. I thought too that you were not cold to my advances; and fearing lest any hazard should apprise you of my success, and thus run counter to my wishes, I lived on here as your servant, still hoping for the hour when I might call you mine, and avow myself the lord of this chateau. How long I might have continued thus I know not. To see you, to look on you, to live beneath the same roof with you, seemed happiness enough, but when I heard that you were to leave this, to go away, never to return perhaps, or if so, not as her I loved and worshipped, then ——. But why look you thus? Is it because you doubt these things? Look here—see this. Is that in form? Are these signatures authentic? Is that the seal of the National Convention? What say you now? It is not the steward Leon that sues, but the Citizen Guichard—*propriètaire de Rochefort.* Now methinks that makes some difference in the proposition.'

"'None, sir,' replied she, with a voice whose steady utterance made each word sink into his heart; 'save as it adds to my contempt for him who has dared to seek my affection in the ruin of my family. I did but despise you before ——'

"'Beware,' said he, in a voice of menace, but in which no violence of passion entered, 'you are in my power. I ask you again, will you consent to be my wife? Will you save your brother from the scaffold, and yourself from beggary and ruin—I can accomplish both.'

"A look of ineffable scorn was all her reply; when he sprang forward and threw his arm round her waist—

"'Or would you drive me to the worst——'

"A terrific shriek broke from her as she felt his hand around her, when the brushwood crashed behind her, and her brother's dogs sprang from the thicket. With a loud cry she called upon his name; he answered from the wood, and dashed towards her just as she sank fainting to the ground.—Leon was gone.

"As soon as returning strength permitted, she told her brother the fearful story of the steward; but bound him by every entreaty not to come himself in contact with a monster so depraved. When they reached the chateau, they learned that Guichard had been there and left it again; and from that hour they saw him no more.

"I must now conclude in a few words, and to do so, may mention, that in the year '99, I became the purchaser of Haute Rochefort, at a sale of forfeited estates, it having been bought by government on some previous occasion, but from whom, and how, I never learned. The story I have told I learned from the notaire of Hubane, the village in the neighbourhood, who was conversant with all its details, and knew well the several actors in it, as well as their future fortunes.

"The brother became a distinguished officer, and rose to some rank in the service, but embarking in the expedition to Ireland, was reported

to Bonaparte as having betrayed the French cause. The result was, he was struck off the list of the army, and pronounced degraded; he died in some unknown place.

"The sister became attached to her cousin, but the brother opposing the union, she was taken away to Paris; the lover returned to Bretagne, where having heard a false report of her marriage at court, he assumed holy orders, and being subsequently charged, but it is now believed falsely, of corresponding with the Bourbons, was shot in his own garden by a platoon of infantry. But how is this; are you ill; has my story so affected you?"

"That brother was my friend—my dearest, my only friend—Charles de Meudon."

"What! and did you know poor Charles?"

But I could not speak; the tears ran fast down my cheeks, as I thought of all his sorrows—sorrows far greater than ever he had told me.

"Poor Marie," said the general, as he wiped a tear from his eye; "few have met such an enemy as she did: every misfortune of her life has sprung from one hand; her brother—her lover's death, were both his acts."

"Leon Guichard! And who is he? or how could he have done these things?"

"Methinks you might yourself reply to your own question."

"I! how could that be? I know him not."

"Yes, but you do: Leon Guichard is Mehée de La Touche!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen between us, I could not have felt more terror. That name spoken but twice or thrice in my hearing, had each time brought its omen of evil. It was the same with whose acquaintance Marie de Meudon charged me in the garden at Versailles, the same who brought the Chouans to the guillotine, and had so nearly involved myself in their ruin; and now I heard of him as one whose dreadful life had been a course of perfidy and crime, one who blasted all around him, and scattered ruin as he went.

"I have little more to add," resumed the general, after a long pause, and in a voice whose weakened accents evinced how fearfully the remembrance he called up, affected him. "What remains, too, more immediately concerns myself than others. I am the last of my house—an ancient family, and one not undistinguished in the annals of France, hangs but on the feeble thread of a withered and broken old man's life, with whom it dies; my only brother fell in the Austrian campaign.—I never had a sister; uncles and cousins I have had in numbers, but death and exile have been rife these last twenty years, and save myself, none bears the name of D'Auvergne. Yet once I nourished the hope of a family—of a race who should hand down the ancient virtues of our house to after years. I thought of those gallant ancestors whose portraits graced the walls of the old chateau I was born in, and fancied myself leading my infant boy from picture to picture, as I pointed out the brave and the good, who had been his

forefathers. But this is a dream long since dispelled. I was then a youth, scarce older than yourself, rich, and with every prospect of happiness before me; I fell in love, and the object of my passion seemed one created to have made the very paradise I sought for. She was beautiful, beyond even the loveliest of a handsome court; highborn and gifted; but her heart was bestowed on another,—one who unlike myself, encouraged no daring thoughts, no ambitious longings, but who, wholly devoted to her he loved, sought in tranquil quiet the happiness such spirits can give each other. She told me herself, frankly, as I speak now to you, that she could not be mine, and then placed my hand in her husband's. This was Marie de Rochefort, the mother of Mademoiselle de Meudon.

"The world's changes seem ever to bring about these strange vicissitudes by which our early deeds of good and evil are brought more forcibly to our memories, and we are made to think over the past by some accident of the present. After twenty years I came to live in that chateau where she, whom I once loved, had lived and died. I became the lord of that estate which her husband once possessed, and where in happiness they had dwelt together. I will not dwell upon the thoughts such associations ever give rise to; I dare not, old as I am, evoke them." He paused for some minutes, and then went on—"Two years ago I learned that Mademoiselle de Meudon was the daughter of my once loved Marie; from that hour I felt no longer childless; I watched over her, without however attracting notice on her part, and followed her everywhere; the very day I saw you first at the Polytechnique I was beside her. From all I could learn and hear, her life had been one of devoted attachment to her brother, and then to Madame Bonaparte; her heart, it was said, was buried with him she once loved, at least none since had ever won even the slightest acknowledgment from her, bordering on encouragement.

"Satisfied that she was every thing I could have wished my own daughter, and feeling that with youth the springs of affection rarely dry up, I conceived the idea of settling all my property on her, and entreating the emperor to make me her guardian, with her own consent of course. He agreed; he went further; he repealed, so far as it concerned her, the law by which the daughters of royalists cannot inherit, and made her eligible to succeed to property, and placed her hand at my disposal.

"Such was the state of matters when I wrote to you; since that I have seen her, and spoken to her in confidence; she has consented to every portion of the arrangement, save that which involves her marrying; but some strange superstition being over her mind that her fate is to ruin all with whom it is linked, that her name carries an evil destiny with it, she refuses every offer of marriage, and will not yield to my solicitation.

"I thought," said the general, as he leaned on his hand, and muttered half aloud, "that I had conceived a plan which must bring happiness with it; but, however, one part of my design is accomplished,

she is my heir—the daughter of my own loved Marie is the child of my adoption, and for this I have reason to feel grateful. The cheerless feeling of a death-bed, where not one mourns for the dying, haunts me no longer, and I feel not as one deserted and alone. To-morrow I go to wish her adieu; we are to be at the Tuileries by noon. The emperor holds a levee, and our final orders will then be given."

The old general rallied at the last few words he spoke, and pressing my hand affectionately, wished me good night, and withdrew. While I, with a mind confused and stunned, sat thinking over the melancholy story he had related, and sorrowing over the misfortunes of one, whose lot in life had been far sadder than my own.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE HALL OF THE MARSHALS.

Some minutes before noon we entered the Place de Carousel, now thronged with equipages and led horses. Officers, in the rich uniforms of every arm of the service, were pressing their way to the palace, amid the crash of carriages, the buzz of recognitions, and the thundering sounds of the brass band, whose echo was redoubled beneath the vaulted vestibule of the palace.

Borne along with the torrent, we mounted the wide stair and passed from room to room, until we arrived at the great antechamber where the officers of the household were assembled in their splendid dresses. Here the crowd was so dense, we were unable to move on for some time, and it was after nearly an hour's waiting, that we at last found ourselves within that gorgeous gallery, named by the emperor, "La salle des Maréchaux." At any other moment my attention had been rivetted upon the magnificence and beauty of this great *salon*, its pictures, its gildings, the richness of the hangings, the tasteful elegance of the ceiling, with its tracery of dull gold, the great works of art in bronze and marble that adorned it on every side; but now my mind took another and very different range. Here around me were met the greatest generals and warriors of Europe. The names, second alone to his, who had no equal. There stood Ney, with his broad, retiring forehead, and his eyes black and flashing, like an eagle's. With what energy he spoke, how full of passionate vigour that thick and rapid utterance, that left a tremulous quavering on his lip even when he ceased to speak. What a contrast to the bronzed unmoved features of

the large man he addressed, and who listened to him with such deference of manner; his yellow moustache bespeaks not the Frenchman, he is a German, by blood at least, for it is Kellerman, the colonel of the cuirassiers of the guard. And yonder was Soult, with his strong features seamed by many a day of hardship, the centre of a group of colonels of the staff, to whom he was rapidly communicating their orders. Close beside him stood Lannes, his arm in a sling; a gunshot wound that defied the art of his surgeons, still deprived him of his left hand. And there leaned Savary against the window, his dark eyes rivetted on the corps of gendarmerie in the court beneath. Full taller by a head than the largest about him, he seemed almost gigantic in the massive accoutrements of his service. The fierce Davoust, the gay and splendid Murat, with his waving plumes and jewelled dolman. Lefebvre, the very type of his class, moving with difficulty from a wound in his hip—all were there—while passing rapidly from place to place, I remarked a young and handsome man, whose uniform of colonel bore the decoration of the legion—he appeared to know and be known to all—this was Eugene Beauharnais, the stepson of the emperor. "Ah, General D'Auvergne," cried he, approaching with a smile, "his majesty desires to see you after the levee—you leave to-night, I believe."

"Yes, colonel, all is in readiness," said the general, while I thought a look of anxiety at the emperor's summons seemed to agitate his features.

"One of your staff," said Beauharnais, bowing, as he looked towards me.

"My aid-de-camp, Lieutenant Burke," replied the general, presenting me.

"Ah, I remember," said the colonel, as he drew himself proudly up, and seemed as though the recollection were any thing but favourable to me. But just then the wide folding doors were thrown open, and a loud voice proclaimed "sa Majesté L'Empereur." In an instant every voice was hushed, the groups broke up, and the persons fell back into two long lines, between which lay a passage, along this the officers of the palace retired slowly, facing the emperor, who came step by step after them. I could but see the pale face, massive and regular, like the head of an antique cameo; the hair straight combed upon his fine forehead, and his large full eyes, as they turned hither and thither among that crowd, once his equals, now how immeasurably his inferiors. He stopped every now and then to say a word or two to some one as he passed, but in so low a tone, that even in the dead silence around, nothing was audible save a murmur. It was a relief to my own excited feelings, as with high beating heart, I gazed on the greatest monarch of the world—that I beheld the others around, the oldest generals, the time-worn companions of his battles, not less moved than myself.

While the emperor passed slowly along, I could mark that Eugene Beauharnais moved rapidly through the gallery, whispering now to this one, now to that, among the officers of superior grade, who, imme-

diately after, left the *salon* by a door at the end. At length he approached General D'Auvergne, saying, "The audience of the marshals will not occupy more than half an hour, pray be in readiness to wait on his majesty when he calls; you can remain in the blue drawing-room next the gallery."

The general bowed, and taking my arm moved slowly from the spot in the direction mentioned, and in a few minutes we found ourselves in the small room where the empress used to receive her morning visitors during the consulate.

"You remember this *salon*, Burke?" said the general, carelessly.

"Yes, sir, but too well—it was here that his majesty gave me that rebuke——"

"True, true, my dear boy, I forgot that completely—but come, there has been time enough to forget it since. I wonder what can mean this summons to attend here—I have received my orders—there has been, so far as I understand, no change of plan. Well, well, we shall soon know—see, the levee has begun to break up already—there goes the staff of the artillery—that roll of the drum is for some general of division."

And now the crash of carriages, and the sounds of cavalry escorts, jingling beside them, mingled with the deep beating of the drums, made a mass of noises that filled the air, and continued without interruption for above an hour.

"*Sacristi!*" cried the general, "the crowd seems to pour in as fast as it goes out; this may last for the entire day; I have scarce two hours left me now."

He walked the room impatiently, now muttering some broken words to himself, now stopping to listen to the sounds without. Still the din continued, and the distant roll of equipages, growing louder as they came, told that the tide was yet pressing onwards towards the palace. "Three o'clock," cried the general, as the bell of the pavilion sounded; "at four I was to leave; such were my written orders, signed by the minister."

His impatience now became extreme: he knew how difficult it was in a matter of military discipline to satisfy Napoleon that any breach, even when caused by his direct orders, was not a fault. Besides, his old habits had taught him to respect a command from the minister-at-war, as something above all others.

"Beauharnais must have mistaken," said he, angrily. "His majesty gave me my final directions; I'll wait no longer."

Yet did he hesitate to leave, and seemed actually to rely on me for some hint for his guidance. I did not dare to offer a suggestion, and while thus we both stood uncertain, the door opened, and a huissier called out—

"Lieut.-General D'Auvergne—this way, sir," said the official, as he threw open a folding door into a long gallery that looked into the garden. They passed out together, and I was alone.

The agitation of the general at this unexpected summons, had communicated itself to me, but in a far different way, for I imagined

that his majesty desired only to confer some mark of favour on the gallant old general before parting with him. Yet did I not venture to suggest this to him, for fear I should be mistaken.

While I revolved these doubts in my mind, the door was flung open with a crash, and a page, in the uniform of the court rushed in. "May I ask, sir," cried he, breathless, "can you inform me where is the aid-de-camp of the General D'Auvergne. I forget the name unfortunately."

"I am the person—Lieutenant Burke."

"The same, that is the name—come after me with all haste, this way;" and so saying, he rushed down a flight of stone stairs, clearing six or seven at a spring.

"A hurried business this, lieutenant," said the page, laughingly. "Took them all by surprise—I fancy."

"What is it? What do you mean?" asked I, eagerly.

"Hush!" said he, placing his finger on his lips; "here they come."

We had just time to stand to one side of the gallery, as the officers of the household came up, two and two, followed by the Chancellor of France, and the Dean of St. Roch, in his full canonicals. They approached the table, on which several papers and documents were lying, and proceeded to sign their names to different writings before them. While I looked on, puzzled and amazed, totally unable to make the most vague conjecture of the nature of the proceedings, I perceived that General D'Auvergne had entered the room, and was standing among the rest at the table.

"Whose signature did you propose here, general?" said the chancellor, as he took up a paper before him.

"My aid-de-camp, Lieutenant Burke."

"He is here, sir," said the page, stepping forward.

"You are to sign your name here, sir, and again on this side," said the chancellor, "with your birth-place annexed, age, and rank in the service."

"I am a foreigner," said I; "does that make any difference here?"

"None," said he, smiling; "the witness is but a very subordinate personage here."

I took the pen, and proceeded to write as I was desired; and while thus engaged, the door opened, and a short heavy step crossed the room. I did not dare to look up; some secret feeling of terror ran through me, and told me it was the emperor himself.

"Well, D'Auvergne," said he, in a frank bold way, quite different from his ordinary voice, "you seem but half content with this plan of mine. *Pardieu!* there's many a brave fellow would not deem the case so hard a one."

"As your wish, sire ——."

"As mine, *diantre!* my friend; do not say mine only; you forget that the lady expressed herself equally satisfied. Come! is the *acte* completed?"

"It wants but your majesty's signature," said the chancellor.

The emperor took the pen, and dashed some indescribable scroll across the paper; then turning suddenly towards the general, he conversed with him eagerly for several minutes, but in so low a voice as not to be audible where I stood. I could but catch the words—"Darmstadt—Augsburg—the fourth corps," from which it seemed the movements of the army were the subject; when he added in a louder voice—

"Every hour now is worth a day, ay, a week, hereafter—remember that, D'Auvergne."

"Every thing is finished, sire," said the chancellor, handing the folded papers to the emperor.

"These are for your keeping, general," said he, delivering them into D'Auvergne's hand.

"Pardon, sire," said the chancellor, hastily. "I have made a great error here. Madame la Comtesse has not appended her signature to the consent."

"Indeed!" said the emperor, smiling. "We have been too hasty, it would seem; so thinks our reverend father of Saint Roch, I perceive, who is evidently not accustomed to officiate '*au coup de tambour.*'"

"Her majesty the empress!" said the huissier, as he opened the doors, to permit her to enter. She was dressed in full court-dress, covered with jewels. She held within her arm the hand of another, over whose figure a deep veil was thrown, that entirely concealed her from head to foot.

"Madame la Comtesse will have the kindness to sign this," said the chancellor, as he handed over a pen to the lady. She threw back her veil as he spoke. As she turned towards the table, I saw the pale, almost deathlike features of Marie de Meudon. Such was the shock, I scarce restrained a cry from bursting forth, and a film fell before my eyes as I looked, and the figures before me floated like masses of vapour before my sight.

The empress now spoke to the general, but no longer could I take notice of what was said. Voices there were, but they conveyed nothing to my mind. A terrible rush of thoughts, too quick for perception, chased each other through my brain, and I felt as though my temples were bursting open from some pressure within. Suddenly the general moved forward, and knelt to kiss the empress' hand; he then took that of Mademoiselle de Meudon, and pressed it to his lips. I heard the word "Adieu!" faintly uttered by her low voice; the veil fell once more over her features: that moment a stir followed, and in a few minutes more we were descending the stairs alone, the general leaning on my arm—his right hand pressed across his eyes. When we reached the court, several officers of rank pressed forward, and I could hear the buzz of phrases, implying congratulations and joy, to which the old general replied briefly, and with evident depression of manner. The dreadful oppression of a sad dream was over

me still, and I felt as though to awake were impossible, when to some remark near him, the general replied—

"True! quite true, monseigneur; I have made her my wife. There only remains one reparation for it, which is to make her my widow."

"His wife!" said I, aloud, re-echoing the word without knowing.

"Even so, *mon ami*," said he, pressing my hand softly. "My name and my fortune are both hers. As for myself—we shall never meet again." He turned away his head as he spoke, nor uttered another word during the remainder of the way.

When we arrived at the Rue de Rohan, the horses were harnessed to the carriage, and all in readiness for our departure. The rumour of expected war had brought a crowd of idlers about the door, through which we passed with some difficulty into the house. Hastily throwing an eye over the now dismantled room, the old general approached the window that looked out on the Tuileries. "Adieu!" muttered he to himself. "*Je ne vous reverrai jamais!*" And with that he pressed his travelling-cap over his brows, and descended the stairs.

A cheer burst from the mob—the postillion's whip cracked loudly—the horses dashed over the pavement—and ere the first flurry of mad excitement had subsided from my mind, Paris was some miles behind us, and we were hastening on towards the frontier.

Almost every man has experienced at least one period in his life, when the curtain seems to drop, and the drama in which he has hitherto acted to end; when a total change appears to pass over the interests he has lived among, and a new and very different kind of existence to open before him. Such is the case when the death of friends has left us lone and companionless; when they, into whose ears we poured our whole thoughts of sorrow or of joy, are gone, and we look around upon the bleak world, without a tie to existence, without one hope to cheer us. How naturally then do we turn from every path and place, once lingered over; how do we fly the thoughts wherein once consisted our greatest happiness, and seek from other sources, impressions less painful, because unconnected with the past. Still the bereavement of death is never devoid of a sense of holy calm, a sort of solemn peace connected with the memory of the lost one. In the sleep that knows not waking, we see the end of earthly troubles—in the silence of the grave, come no sounds of this world's contention—the winds that stir the rank grass of the churchyard breathe, at least, repose. Not so when fate has severed us from those we loved best during lifetime; when the fortunes we hoped to link with our own are torn asunder from us; when the hour comes when we must turn from the path we had followed with pleasure and happiness, and seek another road in life, bearing with us not only all the memory of the past, but all the speculation on the future. There is no sorrow, no affliction, like this.

It was thus I viewed my joyless fortune—with such depressing reflections I thought over the past. What mattered it now how my career might turn: there lived not one to care whether rank or honour, disgrace or death, were to be my portion. The glorious path I often

longed to tread opened for me now, without exciting one spark of enthusiasm: so is it even in our most selfish desires, we live less for ourselves than others.

If my road in life seemed to present few features to hang hopes on, he who sat beside me appeared still more depressed. Seldom speaking, and then but in monosyllables, he remained sunk in reverie. And thus passed the days of our journey, when on the third evening we came in sight of Coblentz. Then indeed there burst upon my astonished sight one of those scenes which once seen, are never forgotten. From the gentle declivity which we were now descending, the view extended several miles in every direction. Beneath us lay the city of Coblentz, its spires and domes shining like gilded bronze as the rays of the setting sun fell upon them; the Moselle swept along one side of the town till it mingled its eddies with the broad Rhine, now one sheet of liquid gold; the long pontoon bridge, against whose dark cut-waters the bright stream broke in sparkling circles, trembled beneath the dull roll of artillery and baggage-waggons, which might be seen issuing from the town, and serpentining their course along the river's edge for miles till they were lost in the narrow glen by which the Lahn flows into the Rhine; beyond rose the great precipice of rock, with its crowning fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, along whose battlemented walls, almost lost in the heavy clouds of evening, might be seen dark specks moving from place to place—the soldiers of the garrison looking down from their eyrie on the war-tide that flowed beneath. Lower down the river many boats were crossing, in which, as the sunlight shone, one could mark the glancing of arms and the glitter of uniforms; while farther again, and in deep shadow, rose the solitary towers of the ruined castle of Lahneck, its shattered walls and grass-grown battlements standing clearly out against the evening sky.

Far as we were off, every breeze that stirred bore towards us the softened swell of military music, which, even when too faint to trace, made the air tremulous with its martial sounds. Along the ramparts of the city were crowds of townspeople gazing with anxious wonderment at the spectacle, for none knew, save the generals in command of divisions, the destination of that mighty force—the greatest, Europe had ever seen up to that period. Such indeed were the measures taken to ensure secrecy, that none were permitted to cross the frontier without a special authority from the minister for foreign affairs; the letters in the various post-offices were detained, and even travellers were denied post-horses on the great roads to the eastward, lest intelligence might be conveyed to Germany of the movement in progress. Meanwhile at Manheim, at Spire, at Strasbourgh, and at Coblentz, the long columns streamed forth, whose eagles were soon destined to meet in the great plains of southern Germany. Such was the gorgeous spectacle that each moment grew more palpable to our astonished senses—grander far than any thing painting could realise—more spirit-stirring than the grandest words that poet ever sung.

"The cuirassiers and the dragoons of the guard are yonder," said the general, as he directed his glass to a large square of the town,

where a vast mass of dismounted cavalry were standing: "you see how punctual they are; we are but two hours behind our time, and they are awaiting our arrival."

"And do we move forward to-night, general?" asked I, in some surprise.

"Yes, and every night. The marches are to be made fourteen hours each day. There go the lancers of Berg—you see their scarlet dolmans, don't you? and yonder, in the three large boats, beyond the point, there are the sappers of the guard——What are the shouts I hear—whence comes that cheering?"

"Oh, I see; it's a vivandiere, her horse has backed into the river. See—see—she is going to swim him over. Look how the current takes him down——Bravely done, faith. She heads him to the stream —it won't do though, she must be carried down." Just at this critical moment a boat shoots out from under the cliff—a few strokes of the oars, and they are alongside—there's a splash and a shout, and the skiff moves on; "and now I see they have given her a rope, and are towing her and her horse across."

"See how the old spirit comes back with the first blast of the trumpet," said the old general, as his eyes flashed with enthusiasm. "That damsel there, I'll warrant ye, she'd have thought twice about stepping over a rivulet in the streets of Paris yesterday, and look at her now. Well done—gallantly done. See how she spurs him up the bank! *Ma foi*, mademoiselle, you'll have no lack of lovers for that achievement."

A few minutes more and we entered the town, whose streets were thronged with soldiers hurrying on to their different corps, and eager townsfolk asking a hundred questions, to which of course few waited to reply.

"This way, general," said an officer in undress, who recognised General D'Auvergne. "The cavalry of the third division is stationed in the square."

Passing through a narrow street, through which the caleche had barely room to pass, we now found ourselves in the Place, a handsome space surrounded with a double row of trees, under which the dragoons were lying, holding the bridles of their horses.

The general had scarcely put foot to ground, when the trumpets sounded the call. The superior officers came running forward to greet him. Taking the arm of a short man, in the uniform of the cuirassiers, the general entered a *café*, near, while I became the centre of some dozen officers, all eagerly asking the news from Paris; and whether the emperor had yet left the capital. It was not without considerable astonishment I then perceived how totally ignorant they all were of the destination of the army: many alleging it was destined for Russia; and others equally positive that the Prussians were the object of attack; the arguments in support of each opinion being wonderfully ingenious, and only deficient in one respect, having not a particle of fact for their foundation. In the midst of these conjecturings came a new subject for discussion; for one of the group who had

just received a letter from his brother, a page at the Tuileries, was reading the contents aloud for the benefit of the rest—

"'Jules says that they are all astray as to the emperor's movements; Duroc has left Paris suddenly, but no one knows for where; the only thing certain is, a hot campaign is to open somewhere—one hundred and eighty thousand men———'

"Bah!" said an old white-moustached major, with a look of evident unbelief; "we never had forty with the army of the Sambre."

"And what then?" said another, fiercely; "do you compare your army of the Sambre, your *sans culottes* republicans, with the imperial troops?"

The old major's face became deeply crimsoned, and with a muttered *á demain*, he walked away.

"Go after him, Amedée," said another; "you had no right to say that."

"Not I, faith," said the other, carelessly; "there is a grudge between us these three weeks past, and we may as well have it out. Go on with the letter, Henri."

"Oh, it is filled with court gossip," said the reader, negligently. "Ha! what's this, though—the postscript—

"'I have just time to tell you the strangest bit of news we have chanced upon for some time past. The emperor has this moment married old General D'Auvergne to the very handsomest girl in the empress's suite, Mademoiselle de Meudon. There is a rumour afloat about the old man having made her his heir, and desiring to confer her hand on some young fellow of his own choosing; but this passion to make court matches, which has seized his majesty lately, stops at nothing; and it is whispered that old Madame d'Orvalle is actually terrified at every levee, lest she should be disposed of, to one of the new marshals. I must say that the general looks considerably put out by the arrangement; not unnaturally, perhaps, as he is likely to pass the honeymoon in the field; while his aid-de-camp, a certain Monsieur Burke, whose name you may remember figuring in the affair of Pichegru and George———'

"Perhaps it were as well, sir," said I quietly, "that I should tell you the person alluded to is myself. I have no desire to learn how your correspondent speaks of me; nor, I take it for granted, do these gentlemen desire to canvass me in my own hearing; with your leave, then, I shall withdraw."

"A word, monsieur, one word, first," said the officer, whose insolent taunt had already offended the veteran major; "we are most of us here staff officers, and I need not say accustomed to live pretty much together. Will you favour us, then, with a little explanation as to the manner in which you escaped a trial in that business: your name, if I mistake not, did not figure before the tribunal after the first day?"

"Well, sir; and then?"

"And then? why, there is one only explanation in such a circumstance."

"And that is, if I may make so bold——"

"That the '*mouchard*' fares better than his victim."

"I believe, sir," said I, "I comprehend your meaning; I hope there will be no fear of your mistaking mine." With that I drew off the long gauntlet glove I wore, and struck him across the face.

Every man sprang backwards as I did so, as though a shell had fallen in the midst of us; while a deep voice called out from behind—

"Le Capitaine Amedée Pichot is under arrest."

I turned, and beheld the prevost marshal with his guard approach, and take my adversary's sword from him.

"What charge is this, marshal?" said he, as a livid colour spread over his cheek.

"Your duel of yesterday, capitaine; you seem to forget all about it already."

"Whenever, and wherever you please, sir," said I, passing close beside him, and speaking in a whisper.

He nodded, without uttering a word in reply, and moved after the guard; while the others dispersed silently, and left me standing alone in the Place.

What would I not have given at that moment for but one friend to counsel and advise me: and yet, save the general, to whom I dared not speak on such a subject, I had not one in the whole world. It was, indeed, but too true, that life had little value for me; yet never did I contemplate a duel with more abhorrence. The insult I had inflicted, however, could have no other result. While I reasoned thus, the door of the *café* opened, and the general appeared.

"Burke," cried he, "come in here, and make a hasty supper; you must be in the saddle in half an hour."

"Quite ready, sir,"

"I know it, my lad. Your orders are there: ride forward to Ettingen, and prepare the billets for the fourth demi-brigade, which will reach that village by to-morrow evening; you'll have time for something to eat, and a glass of wine, before the orderly arrives. This piece of duty is put on you, because a certain Captain Pichot, the only one of the commissaries' department who can speak German, has just been put under arrest for a duel he fought yesterday. I wish the court martial would shoot the fellow, with all my heart and soul; he's a perfect curse to the whole division. In any case, if he escape this time, I'll keep my eye on him, and he'll scarce get clear through my hands, I warrant him."

It may be supposed that I heard these words with no common emotion, bearing as they did so closely on my own circumstances at the moment: but I hung down my head and affected to eat, while the old general walked hastily up and down the *salon*, muttering, half aloud, heavy denunciations on the practice of duelling, which, at any cost of life, he resolved to put down in his command.

"Done already; why, man, you've eaten nothing. Well, then, I see the orderly without: you've got a capital moonlight for your ride; and so, *au revoir*."

"Good-bye, sir," said I, as I sprang into the saddle; "and now for Ettingen."

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